

**Montana Department of
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

Brian Schweitzer, Governor

P.O. Box 200901 • Helena, MT 59620-0901 • (406) 444-2544 • www.deq.mt.gov

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Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review and comment is the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. 230 kV Transmission Line*.

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has prepared the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the 230-kV electric transmission line proposed by Montana Alberta Tie, Ltd. (MATL) to satisfy the requirements of the Montana Major Facility Siting Act (MFSA) and the Montana Environmental Policy Act. The draft EIS will be used by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) as an environmental assessment to evaluate the potential impacts of issuing a Presidential permit to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Under the Proposed Action, MATL would build the transmission line between Lethbridge, Alberta, and Great Falls, Montana. This document analyzes the potential impacts of the Proposed Action and the following alternatives: 1) No Action (not issuing the MFSA certificate of compliance and the Presidential permit); 2) MATL B (an alternative route proposed by MATL); and 3) the Agency Alternative (developed to address various issues raised during scoping). DEQ also considered additional location segments when developing these alternatives and based on public comment may consider portions of these additional segments in its final decision. Other factors that must be considered before a certificate of compliance can be issued under MFSA also are discussed in the document.

DEQ has tentatively selected the Proposed Action as the preferred alternative, with small revisions to its alignment in five areas to reduce impacts. In addition, MATL would be required to use single pole structures along approximately 24 miles of line described in Appendix A of this document. Finally, administrative rules require DEQ to include a set of environmental specifications when issuing its approval, and these specifications are listed in Appendix F. Areas where the Proposed Action would be realigned include:

- Beginning about 0.4 miles south of Highway 2, the alignment would shift west about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to more closely follow a property line and continue south for about 2 miles.

- Beginning just south of the Valier highway (State Route 44), the alignment would shift to the west about 0.3 mile and continue south to Williams Road, where the alignment would diagonal about 0.6 mile to the southeast before rejoining the proposed alignment. This shift would avoid locating the line within about 270 feet of a house.
- Near the crossing of the Marias River, the alignment would be shifted slightly to avoid a cultural resource site.
- Near the crossing of the Teton River, the alignment would be shifted about 0.2 mile to the east on state school trust land to better use field boundaries.
- About 2 miles south of the Teton River, the alignment would be shifted east about 1 mile to parallel an existing transmission line to increase the distance from two houses and alleviate interference with farming practices.

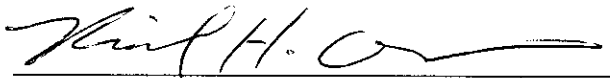
The preferred alternative could change in response to public comments, new information, or new analysis that might be needed in preparing the final EIS.

Public comments concerning the adequacy and accuracy of this document and recommendations on the final decision under MFSA will be accepted for 30 days. Written comments may be sent to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Director's Office, PO Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901, Attn: Greg Hallsten. Comments can also be e-mailed to MATL@mt.gov or faxed to 406-444-4386.

DEQ will hold three public hearings to take verbal and written comments. Dates and locations for the hearings will be announced through area media.

The final EIS might only contain public comments and responses and changes to the draft EIS. Please keep this document for future reference.

If you have further questions regarding this document you may contact either Tom Ring at (406) 444-6785 or Greg Hallsten at (406) 444-3276.



Richard H. Oppen, Director
Montana Department of Environmental Quality